

Education and Workforce Development Cabinet

Better Hearing and Speech Month observed in May

Press Release Date: Wednesday, May 13, 2009

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FRANKFORT, KY – Three million American children and teens under 18 years of age have some hearing loss and for many of them controllable external noises are the cause, according to the American Academy of Otolaryngology – Head and Neck Surgery (AAO-HNS).

“During Better Hearing and Speech Month in May, the Kentucky Commission on Deaf and Hard of Hearing (KCDHH) encourages parents and caregivers to be more aware of the noises that their children are exposed to and take steps to protect their hearing. It’s also important to teach them how to properly protect their hearing by avoiding any unnecessary exposure to loud noise and using proper protection such as earplugs when avoidance is not possible,” said Liz Hill, executive director of the KCDHH.

At home, school and during recreational activities, children and teens are being exposed to potentially harmful noise levels on a regular basis. Loud toys, video games, personal music devices, musical instruments, concerts, loud vehicles, lawn mowers and power tools can all lead to noise-induced hearing loss (NIHL) if precautions are not taken.

“Continuous exposure to loud noises, such as those coming from a power saw or a leaf blower, for a prolonged period of time, or even a one-time exposure to an intense impulse sound like an explosion can lead to noise-induced hearing loss (NIHL). Ten million Americans currently suffer from irreversible NIHL while another 30 million are exposed to harmful noise levels on a daily basis and that includes children and teens,” said Hill.

The loudness of sound is measured in units called decibels (dB). Normal conversation is measured at approximately 60 dB, the humming of a refrigerator at about 40 dB, and heavy city traffic noise or a loud stereo at roughly 85 dB. The sound from a personal mp3 player at maximum level has been measured at 115 dB. Other causes of NIHL include motorcycles, firecrackers, and firearms; all emitting sounds from 120 to 150 dB. Sounds of less than 80 dB, even after long exposure, are unlikely to cause hearing loss.

To Prevent NIHL:

- Know which noises can cause damage (those above 85 dB).
- Wear earplugs or other hearing protective devices when involved in a loud activity (special earplugs and earmuffs are available at hardware stores and sporting good stores).
- Be alert to hazardous noise in the environment.
- Protect children who are too young to protect themselves.
- Make family, friends and colleagues aware of the hazards of noise.
- Obtain a hearing test by an audiologist, a health professional trained to identify and measure hearing loss.

How Loud is TOO Loud?

dB Levels

150 Firecracker

120 Ambulance siren

115 Personal stereo system at maximum level

110 Chainsaw and rock concert

100 Wood shop and snowmobile

95 Motorcycle

90 Power Mower

85 Heavy City Traffic

60 Normal Conversation

40 Refrigeration humming

30 Whispered voice

Take this simple test to identify your hearing needs:

- Do you have a problem hearing over the telephone?
- Do you have trouble following conversations when two or more people are talking?
- Do people complain that you turn the TV volume up too high?
- Do you have to strain to understand conversations?
- Do you have trouble hearing in a noisy background?
- Do you find yourself asking people to repeat themselves?
- Do many people you talk to seem to mumble or not speak clearly?
- Do you misunderstand what others are saying and respond inappropriately?
- Do you have trouble understanding the speech of women and children?
- Do people get annoyed because you misunderstand what they say?

If you have answered yes to three or more of these questions, please see your local otolaryngologist (an ear, nose and throat specialist) or audiologist for a hearing evaluation.

For additional information on NIHL, please contact:

American Academy of Audiology (AAA)
 11730 Plaza America Drive, Suite 300
 Reston, VA 20190
 Voice: (703) 790-8466
 Toll-free Voice: (800) 222-2336
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 Fax: (703) 790-8631
 E-mail: info@audiology.org
 Internet: www.audiology.org

American Speech-Language-Hearing Association (ASHA)
 10801 Rockville Pike
 Rockville, MD 20852
 Voice: (301) 897-5700
 Toll-free Voice: (800) 638-8255
 TTY: (301) 897-0157 Fax: (301) 571-0457
 E-mail: actioncenter@asha.org
 Internet: www.asha.org

Hearing Loss Association of America (formerly Self Help for Hard of Hearing People, Inc.)
7910 Woodmont Avenue, Suite 1200
Bethesda, MD 20814
Voice: (301) 657-2248
TTY: (301) 657-2249
Fax: (301) 913-9413
E-mail: info@hearingloss.org
Internet: www.hearingloss.org

Hearing Conservation Association (NHCA)
7995 East Prentice Avenue, Suite 100
Greenwood Village, CO 80111
Voice: (303) 224-9022
Fax: (303) 770-1614
E-mail: nhca@gwami.com
Internet: www.hearingconservation.org

For information about services for deaf or hard of hearing individuals in Kentucky, please contact the Kentucky Commission on the Deaf and Hard of Hearing.

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The Kentucky Commission on the Deaf and Hard of Hearing has spent more than a quarter century providing effective and efficient leadership, education, advocacy and programs to eliminate barriers and to meet the social, economic, cultural and intellectual needs of deaf and hard of hearing Kentuckians. For more information, contact:

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